database device being further configured to receive a database query that includes a client identifying information value, search for a matching data entry that matches the client identifying information value and, if the matching data entry is found, send a database reply that includes the value of the tunnel endpoint identifier field of the matching data entry;

an initiator network device for receiving a call request from a client and, responsive thereto, generate a database query having the client identifying information value for the client from which the call request is received, and where the initiator network device is further configured, when a database reply corresponding to the database query for the calling client is received, to establish a connection to an endpoint network device corresponding to the tunnel endpoint identifier value included in the database reply and,

when no database reply corresponding to the database query for the calling client is received, the initiator network device is configured to locally select a locally determined tunnel endpoint value and establish a connection for the client to a local network device corresponding to the locally determined tunnel endpoint value.

17. (Amended)   A network system for transmitting and receiving packets across a network, the network device comprising:

a database device coupled to the network and configured to receive a first predetermined type of message having a client identifier field and, responsive thereto, search for a database entry having a key field with a value matching a value of the client identifier field, where the database entry includes a tunnel endpoint address field and, when a corresponding database entry is found, generate a second predetermined type of message having the client identifier field that includes the value of the key field of the database entry and a tunnel endpoint field that includes a

value of the tunnel endpoint address field of the database entry, and where the database device is configured to receive a third predetermined type of message having the client identifier field and the tunnel endpoint address field of the database entry and, responsive thereto, store a database entry corresponding to a value in the client identifier field of the third predetermined type of message and having a value of the tunnel endpoint field of the third predetermined type of message in the endpoint address field of the database entry;

a first network device coupled to the network and configured to receive a first call request from a client device and, responsive thereto, locally select a second network device coupled to the network and establish a first connection for the client device from the first network device to the second network device, where the first network device is also configured to generate the third predetermined type of message having a value corresponding to the client device in the client identifier field and an address value corresponding to the second network device in the tunnel endpoint field; and

a third network device coupled to the network and configured to receive a second call request from the client device and, responsive thereto, generate the first predetermined type of message having the value corresponding to the client device in the client identifier field, and where the third network device is also configured to wait for a predetermined time period to receive the second predetermined type of message having a value of the client identifier field corresponding to the client device and, using the value of the tunnel endpoint field of the second predetermined type of message, establish a second connection to the second network device.

REMARKS

The December 31, 2002 Office Action stated that the drawings in this application are